

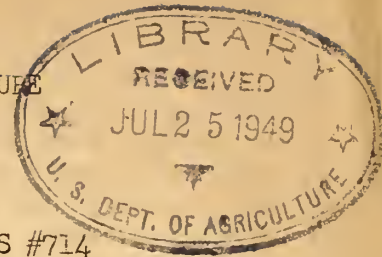
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE  
Washington, D. C.



FIELD MEMORANDUM SCS #714

Re: Organization and Procedure in  
Soil Conservation Research

September 24, 1938

TO ALL RANKING FIELD OFFICERS:

Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify and make effective the policies which evolution of the soil conservation program has indicated as necessary in the field of research and to establish the authorities and responsibilities of the various members of the Soil Conservation Service and their relationship to cooperating agencies. It is based largely on field experience in coordinating the various activities of the Service and complies with (1) the report of June 5, 1935, of the Secretary's Committee on Soil Conservation and (2) the memoranda of understanding which have been entered into by the Soil Conservation Service with the several State experiment stations.

In brief, this memorandum is intended to insure:

I. That the research program of the Soil Conservation Service will be based upon field needs as determined by experience in the work program. It will be developed by consultation among the Regional Conservators and their staffs, the Research Division of the Soil Conservation Service, and the Directors of the cooperating State experiment stations after a survey of already-existing research in the State stations and in other bureaus of the Department.

II. That when the program is agreed upon the research work will be prosecuted cooperatively by the Division of Research, Soil Conservation Service, and the State Agricultural Experiment Stations under appropriate cooperative agreements.

III. That the work will be conducted in such close cooperation with the State Agricultural Experiment Stations as to form an effective part of their coordinated State agricultural research programs.

IV. That the widest possible degree of local control of the work compatible with an effective national program of soil conservation will be permitted.

V. That, by redefinition of administrative and technical responsibilities in the Division of Research in Washington, the general administration of the research program which must be performed in Washington will be more closely coordinated, and the size of the staff responsible for administration and the cost of over-all direction of the research program will be reduced as far as practicable.

### General Premises

A. The general purpose of all appropriations for research is to find the basic facts necessary for the improvement and development of soil and water conservation practices and flood control measures, as well as practical methods for putting these practices and measures into effect.

B. To be most effective and practical, control measures in most cases must become part of the general agricultural or land use programs, of the various problem areas.

C. If results are to be obtained in soil conservation research and the limited available moneys expended to the best advantage of the public, it is necessary that rigid control be exercised to the end that all projects are held strictly in line with the purposes of Congress in making the appropriations, and that the work not be permitted to expand into related fields only indirectly affecting soil and water conservation.

D. Experience of Soil Conservation Service technicians, State and Department workers, and thousands of cooperating farmers in field operations has, by empirical methods, developed many effective practices. These are constantly being studied and evaluated, but it is realized that the most effective method of perfecting these practices and extending them to new areas and conditions will be through research, in order to obtain an understanding of the basic causal relationships involved in these practical field problems. Since these are field problems, it is obvious, therefore, that the largest possible measure of freedom should be given field workers in solving them and that control and direction should be as close as possible to the field work. With full utilization of existing facilities, Washington personnel will be reduced to the barest minimum necessary to the end that the responsibilities of the Department, assigned by Congress to this Service under the administration of the Secretary of Agriculture, are properly carried out.

The following outline of organization and method of operation is based on these general premises.

### Washington Organization

I. Chief and Assistant Chief of Division. The Chief and Assistant Chief of the Division of Research are members of the general directional staff of the Service and, as such, under the Chief of the Service, are charged with responsibility for: (1) general planning of the research program of the Service, including (a) preparation and recommendation of estimates of research



expenditures for inclusion in the budget requests of the Service, (b) allotment of research funds in accordance with field needs, Service policies, and the procedures and policies established by the Department, (c) preparation and submission to the Chief of the Service of cooperative research agreements between the Service and State agencies, (d) application within the Research Division of fiscal policies and procedures prescribed by the Division of Administration; (2) for providing under the established administrative procedures of the Service and in collaboration with cooperating State agencies for the selection and location of technical personnel, maintenance of offices and equipment, and securing of other facilities necessary to the work; (3) for making certain that approved plans and agreements are carried out by members of the research staff to which specific assignments have been made and that proper reports are made of such work.

II. Washington Research Staff. A limited staff to assist the Division Chief and Assistant Chief in carrying out the responsibilities outlined above will be maintained in Washington. This staff will consist of (1) the heads of technical Sections, each with a limited number of assistants, whose responsibilities shall consist of (a) technical guidance of sectional research program, (b) assistance to field workers in the preparation of work plans, (c) inspections, and such administrative or technical assignments as may be made by the Division Chief, each assignment being covered by specific written directions, (d) research work on definitely outlined projects, (e) assisting field workers on request on technical problems, (f) assisting field workers with preparation of reports, papers, bulletins, etc.; (2) technical assistants to the Division Chief for special lines of work for which definite positions have been allocated by the Department and Civil Service Commission, and occasional workers on special assignments approved by the Chief of the Service; (3) research workers on projects of a general nature which can best be conducted by traveling field parties or under which the work in any one State is not sufficient to warrant setting up of permanent headquarters (sedimentation surveys in reservoirs and climatic areal studies, for example); (4) an administrative assistant with necessary clerical assistance to handle all of the Washington work of the Division, with the Division of Administration; (5) secretarial and stenographic assistance.

## Field Organization

### Planning and Administration

Since, as is pointed out in the General Premises set forth above, the primary function of the Division of Research is to assist in developing a sound and practical field operating program of soil and water conservation and flood control, the relation of the research program to the other programs of the Service is of first importance. To provide closer contact with field problems, the direct administration of all programs of the Soil Conservation Service, except research, has been decentralized into regional offices in charge of Regional Conservators. Except in the Southern Great Plains, where wind erosion creates a special problem area, the Soil Conservation Service regions consist of groups of States. The Service is represented in each State by a State Coordinator who is a member of the Regional Conservator's staff, although he is located within the State, usually at the State College of Agriculture. The State Coordinator is a member of the State Soil Conservation Advisory Committee, a planning committee for soil conservation within the State.

In view of these facts, it seems advisable to leave the selection of field problems on which research is to be undertaken, largely to (1) the Regional Conservator, or, under his direction, the State Coordinator, and (2) the Director of the State Experiment Station or such representatives as he may select. The Regional Conservator will, therefore, be charged with the following responsibilities in connection with the Soil Conservation Service research program:

(1) He or his duly authorized representative will present the specific research needs of the area to the Chief of the Research Division and to the Directors of the cooperating experiment stations.

(2) When funds are not available for the attacking of such problems, it will be the Regional Conservator's duty, in cooperation with State agencies, to gather the facts necessary for presenting these field research needs to the Secretary of Agriculture, the Bureau of the Budget, and Congress.

(3) When funds are available for starting work in a given State, the Regional Conservator will be notified, and with or for the Division of Research, will confer with the Director and staff of the State Experiment Station concerned to decide what specific problems or parts of problems can best be studied with the funds available, and prepare a draft of a cooperative agreement to carry out the work.

(4) When a cooperative agreement has been drawn to the satisfaction of the Director of the State Agricultural Experiment Station, and the Chief of the Soil Conservation Service, and when this agreement is approved by the Director of Research and the Secretary of the



Department of Agriculture, conduct of the work will be the responsibility of the Soil Conservation Service, through the Chief of the Division of Research, and the State Experiment Station Director. The Regional Conservator or his representative will, however, be responsible for making frequent contacts with the Director of the State Experiment Station in order to see that cooperative obligations assumed by the Service are being fulfilled and to report through the Chief of the Division of Research any deviation from the agreement by the Soil Conservation Service representative.

(5) Funds for the research work will be set up in the Regional Office, Payment of salaries, procurement, maintenance of personnel records, and other services necessary for the conduct of Federal business will be performed there or at any convenient office within the region. In this connection, research workers will be regarded as members of the regional staff and may be called by the Conservator for conferences where technical subjects related to their work are discussed.

#### Line Project Leaders

The basic unit of research work in the Department is the "line project", each of which is the immediate responsibility of a line project leader. Before any study can be undertaken, the line project leader must prepare a specific project work plan and submit it to the Chief of the Division of Research for approval.

In preparing line project plans, line project leaders may call on the work project leader or Washington research staff for assistance, and on the State Experiment Station staff. When the proposed study is under cooperative agreement with a State Experiment Station (as is true in the case of all projects except those conducted by Washington research workers and the staff at the California Institute of Technology) it must be approved by the Director of the Experiment Station and the Chief of the Division of Research. When the plan has been approved by the Chief of the Division of Research and has been brought into conformity with Department requirements, it will be submitted to the Director of the State Experiment Station for his approval or modification. When the plan is approved by both, it will constitute the basis for all of the worker's research. It is expected that project plans will be modified as the work progresses and entirely new plans made when the project is completed.

#### Work Project Leaders

Related line projects will be grouped into "work projects" in accordance with the Uniform Project System of the Department. "Work project leaders" will be selected because of special training, experience, or other qualifications from among field research workers. They will exercise no administrative control over the line projects under

them, but will be expected by their technical knowledge and familiarity with the field work to advise the Washington research staff and assist in guiding the leaders of the line projects composing their work project. In addition to these responsibilities, each work project leader will be charged with responsibility for conducting a specific line project and will be governed in connection with it by the same procedures as other line project leaders.

### Project Supervisors

All Soil Conservation Service experiment stations or laboratories will be under the direction of project supervisors\* who, in addition to performing administrative duties, will be responsible either as line project or work project leaders for the conduct of specific research work. Since these field stations are cooperative with the State Experiment Stations, they are essentially in the position of sub-stations dealing with a particular phase of the State agricultural programs. They are, in fact, owned or leased by the Department of Agriculture or the State Experiment Station and it is, therefore, the responsibility of the project supervisor to make certain (1) that the fullest possible use of the land or other facilities be made for conservation purposes, and (2) that where land is not being used for conservation research the cooperating State Experiment Station, other divisions of the Soil Conservation Service, or other bureaus of the Department be permitted to use the land to the greatest benefit of the farmers in the area served.

### Field Administrative Relations

Line and work project leaders will be headquartered at Soil Conservation Service field stations or other Federal Experiment Stations, State Experiment Stations or sub-stations, colleges doing research, or at special laboratories. They are expected to conform to the general regulations (not inconsistent with Department regulations) of the institution at which they are headquartered.

Project leaders, although Federal employees, will work as if staff members of the cooperating State Experiment Station; but their work must be limited to the field laid out in the cooperative agreement, and they cannot be assigned to other duties except by approval of the Service through the Chief of the Division of Research.

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\*Since the term station superintendent generally has a meaning not applicable to laboratories or groups of projects and causes confusion where work is done at a State Experiment Station, the local administrative official of the Soil Conservation Service will be designated as project supervisor.



Facilitating services such as handling of personnel actions, payment of salaries, maintenance of leave records, procurement, auditing and accounting for the research worker will be provided by the regional office or other convenient Soil Conservation Service office under the direction of the regional office. Research workers in this connection will be considered members of the regional staff.

### Reports

On the fifteenth of each month a brief progress report, not to exceed two double-spaced, 8x10 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", typewritten pages, will be made by each line project leader and mailed directly to the Research Division Chief, except where several are located at the same station, in which case the project supervisors or the senior workers will assemble them, brief them, and mail them as one report. A copy will be sent at the same time to the Director of the cooperating State Experiment Station and the Regional Conservator.

On February 1 each year a report (Briefly summarizing the progress of the year) will be expected of each line project leader. These reports will be summarized for Soil Conservation Service field stations, laboratories, or watershed projects by the supervisor, or other designated Soil Conservation Service employee. Published papers, or bulletins may be appended as part of the report. Tabular data may be appended for record purposes. No tabular data not prepared for publication will be sent to Washington otherwise, except by special permission of the Chief of the Division or Chief of the Service.

Whenever research findings are sufficiently definite to warrant publication, the worker will be expected to prepare progress reports or other scientific publications. This is considered an essential and important part of his work. Ratings and promotions will be based largely upon the quality and quantity of his output of established facts.

Copies of the annual reports and materials for publication will go to the Director of the cooperating station, the Chief of the Division of Research, the Regional Conservator, and to cooperating bureaus of the Department. No other individuals are authorized to call for additional reports or receive copies of these reports or of other research data unless specifically authorized in writing through the Chief of the Division of Research after clearance with cooperating agencies in accordance with the memoranda of understanding.



Chief

